



Early Childhood  
**Oral  
Health**

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General enquiries about this publication should be directed to:

Manager Oral Health Promotion  
Department of Health  
PO Box 40596, Casuarina, NT 0811

Phone: (08) 8922 6460  
Facsimile: (08) 8922 6426

# A healthy mouth

A healthy mouth has clean, firm gums and clean teeth with no holes.

Teeth are important to chew, smile and speak.

Healthy teeth are strong teeth.



# Tooth growth

Baby's first teeth start to appear when they are about six months old.  
All baby teeth appear by about two and a half years of age.

When your baby is teething there could be some pain. To stop the pain let the baby chew on something like a teething ring or something cold.



The first adult tooth appears at about six years of age.

Around this time baby teeth get loose and fall out.

When this happens new teeth grow in their place.

Caring for teeth should begin as soon as they start to appear.



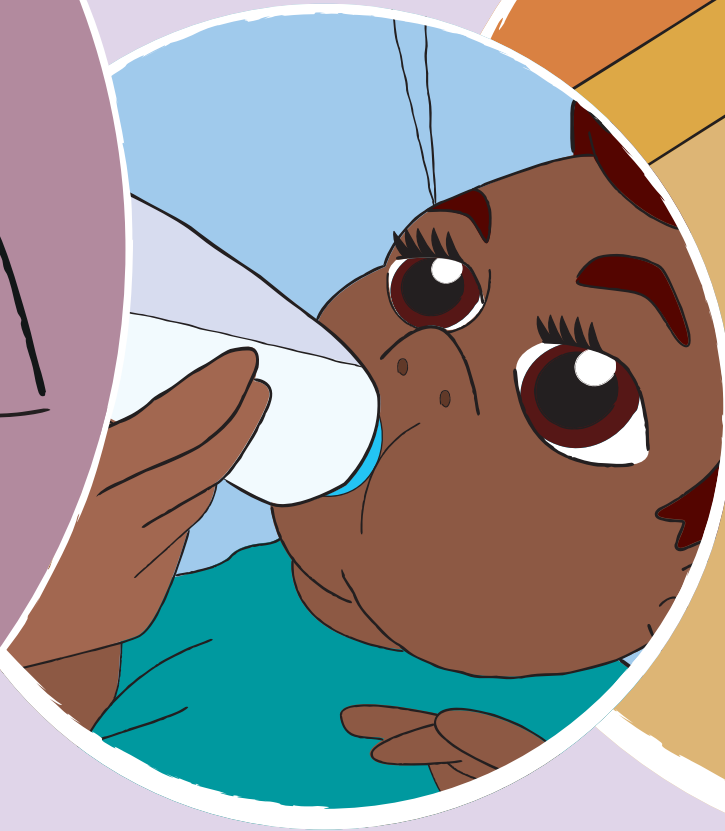
# Feeding your baby

Breast milk is the best drink for your baby. Breast milk helps build strong and healthy teeth.

If bottle feeding:

Take the bottle away when your child is finished drinking.

Do not put your child to bed with a bottle.



At six months of age your child can begin to use a cup.

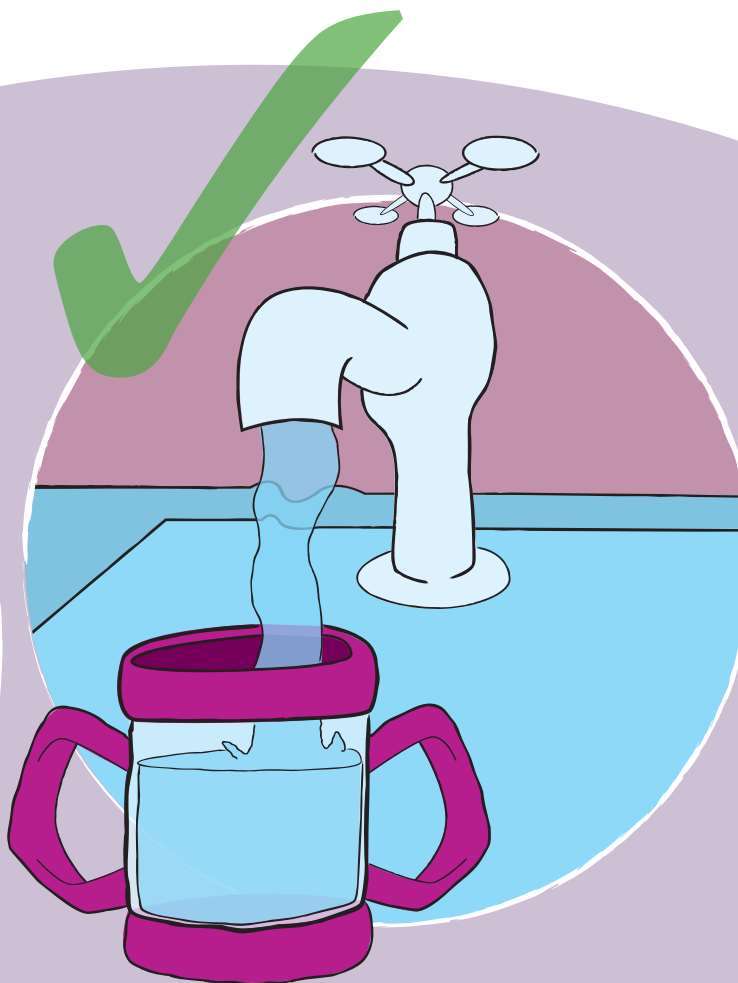
Sugary drinks may lead to holes in your child's teeth.  
The germs living in your mouth, feed off the sugar, which causes the acid that make holes in your teeth.

Milk or water are the best drinks for children.



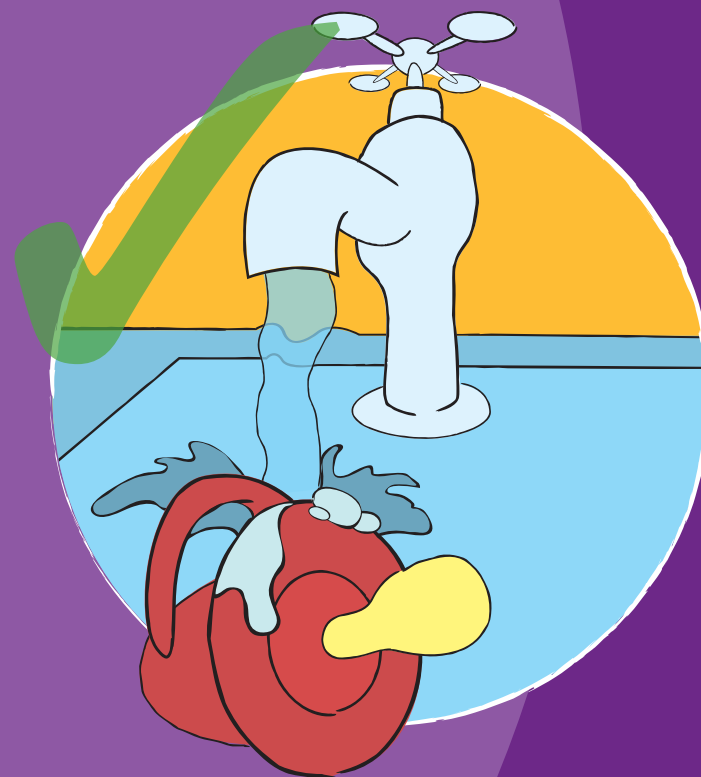
# What's good to give your baby?

Breast milk is the best drink to give your baby. After six months of age you can also give your baby boiled then cooled tap water. After one year small children can drink cow's milk.



# Don't give your child:

Soft drink (including diet soft drinks), fruit drinks, flavoured milk, cordial, sports drink, coffee or tea.



If your child has a dummy do not put anything sweet on it, like honey, this will rot your baby's teeth.

Always clean the dummy under running water, NOT in your mouth.

Putting things in your mouth then giving it to your baby spreads germs to your baby's mouth.



# Tooth decay

Bacteria (germs) on the teeth + sugar = acid.  
This causes an 'acid attack'.

Many 'acid attacks' weaken your teeth and will cause tooth decay overtime.

If the decay is not treated, the hole will become bigger.

The decay can spread to the nerve in the tooth and cause pain.

Regular twice daily toothbrushing will reduce the risk of tooth decay.



# Lift the lip - Look at your child's teeth

Lift your child's lip once a month to check for early signs of decay on all teeth.

White lines along the gum line can be the beginning of decay, at this stage it can be reversible.

More advanced decay can look like brown spots on the teeth.

Talk to an Oral Health Professional, Nurse or Health Worker if you notice any changes to your child's teeth.



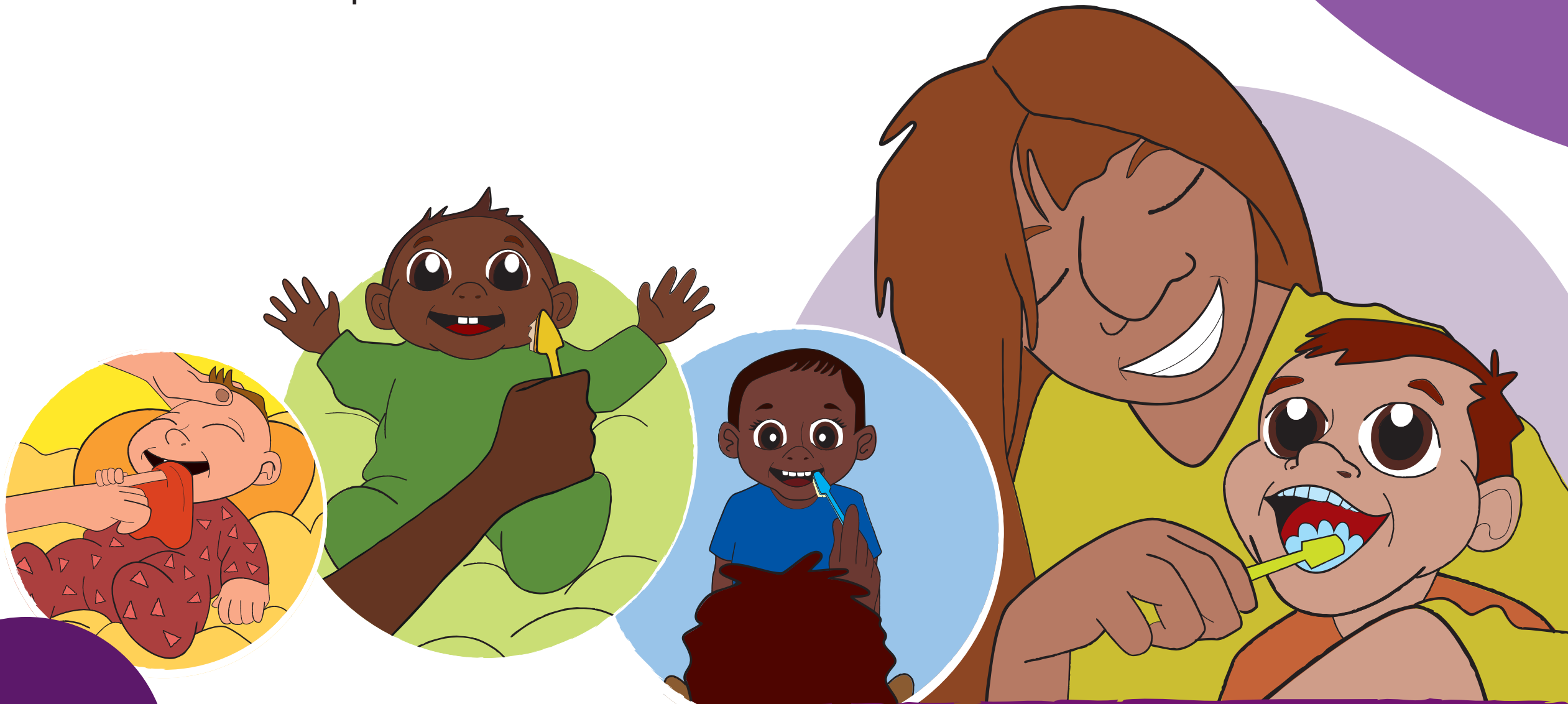
# Cleaning your child's teeth

You should begin cleaning your baby's teeth as soon as they begin to appear. You can begin cleaning your baby's teeth with a clean cloth or soft toothbrush.

Cleaning teeth twice a day, in the morning and at night helps prevent tooth decay.

Until 18 months, clean your child's teeth with a toothbrush and NO toothpaste.

From 18 months to five years use a children's size toothbrush with low fluoride children's toothpaste.



An adult should help a child with cleaning their teeth until they are about seven or eight years of age.

To avoid spreading germs do not share toothbrushes with anyone else.



# Having a check-up

Dental check-ups should begin early, by about two years of age.

Regular check-ups are important so that any tooth or gum problems can be treated before they become too bad.

If you or your child has a toothache, see an Oral Health professional or health worker straight away.

Government Dental Services for children are generally provided by Dental or Oral Health Therapists, who are specially trained to provide oral health services to children.

The Therapist works with a Dental Assistant, who provides chair side assistance, and helps run the clinic.

In some cases your child may be referred to a Dentist or Specialist if more complex or specialised treatment or advice is needed.



# Keep teeth and gums healthy

## Brush well

Start cleaning teeth as soon as they appear in the mouth. Brush or clean teeth twice a day. Begin using toothpaste from 18 months of age.

## Drink well

Breast milk, boiled, cooled tap water or cow's milk are best for children. Do not put sugary sweet drinks or juices in bottles.

## Eat well

Eating healthy foods helps keep teeth strong. Limit sugary food and drinks.

## Stay well

A child's first dental check up should be by two years of age. Visit the dental service regularly, not just when in pain.



